



May 26, 2022

Contact: Gina Paige or Jamie Keehn, 608-422-7800 or dcfmedia@wisconsin.gov

Community Action Inc., of Walworth & Rock Counties recognized by Governor Evers and DCF for its Merrill Community Sharing Garden

MADISON – The Merrill Community Sharing Garden, run by Community Action Inc., (CAI) of Walworth & Rock Counties, was honored with the 24th annual Governor’s Award for Excellence in Community Action during the annual Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) meeting held virtually on May 17, 2022.

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Emilie Amundson, on behalf of Governor Tony Evers, presented the 2022 award to CAI of Walworth & Rock Counties for its program aimed at providing food security and building stronger, healthier communities.

“Community Action Programs prove that when we involve communities in the design and delivery of services, we will see positive outcomes and stronger communities,” said Governor Tony Evers. “I am extremely honored to recognize Community Action Inc., of Walworth & Rock Counties for their critical work in reducing the causes and conditions of poverty within their communities.”

The annual winner is chosen based on six criteria: innovation in programming; use of collaborative partnerships; leveraging resources; cost effectiveness; community impact; and, reducing the causes and conditions of poverty.

CAI of Walworth & Rock Counties has transformed a six-block radius of the Merrill Neighborhood, which sits in the heart of Beloit, with an urban community garden where residents can access free, fresh produce and connect with their neighbors and family. Through partnerships with local stakeholders, CAI of Walworth & Rock Counties was able to increase produce offerings and provide delivery throughout the pandemic to ensure community members still had access to healthy meals. Additionally, they have recently added an outdoor education space where children and youth can learn about nutrition and gardening and an outdoor oven where neighbors can learn new recipes and how to cook.

“Community Action Inc., of Walworth & Rock Counties has not only brought food security to the Merrill Neighborhood, but they have also fostered an environment where families and neighbors can come together, learn, and support one another,” said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. “We truly appreciate their work in building stronger communities and look forward to watching the Merrill Community Sharing Garden continue to grow and serve its community in new and unique ways.”

CAI of Walworth & Rock Counties was founded in 1965 and serves Walworth and Rock counties. They develop and implement a broad range of service, including child care; pre-school and school age programs; affordable housing and housing counseling services; at-risk youth

programs; weatherization; community organizing and development; a homeless shelter; health care; and the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program.

To learn more about community action programs in Wisconsin, visit the WISCAP website at www.wiscap.org.

###